

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 179977
ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 SS-15 SSO-00 /026 R

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-----035647 012237Z /64

O 012137Z AUG 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BANGUI IMMEDIATE

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ALSO FOR PCD WOODBURY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CASC, CT

SUBJECT: ARREST OF PCV MAHER

REF: BANGUI

1. DUE TO OVERBOOKING SEYLER AND MAHER WERE NOT ON TWA
890, THEY ARRIVED WASHINGTON EVENING 30 JULY FROM NYC.

2. MAHER REPORTS FOLLOWING CHRONOLOGY:
MONDAY JULY 25, ABOUT 1715 HE WAS DRIVING SOUTH ALONG RIVER
AND STOPPED AT SECOND GUARD POST TO ASK "QU EST-CE QUE
C' EST? (HE ASKED NO OTHER QUESTIONS). GUARD ORDERED HIM
BACK TO FIRST (CHIEF) POST. HE WAS TAKEN INTO COMPOUND AND
SPENT NIGHT THERE ON PORCH. HE WAS NOT QUESTIONED, OR
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PAGE 02 STATE 179977

SEARCHED. HE ASKED TO TELEPHONE EMBASSY OR PCD, REQUESTS
THAT WOULD BE CONTINUED UNTIL FIRST PC CARE PACKAGE
ARRIVED.

3. TUESDAY ABOUT 8:00 HE WAS TAKEN TO OFFICE OF IMPERIAL
SURETE IN CORNER OF CENTRAL PALACE NEAR ENTRANCE
QUARTIER GENERAL BOKASSA. MAHER FILLED IN ARREST FORM

AND SURRENDERED IDENTITY CARD. SPACE FOR CHARGES ON ARREST FORM WAS BLANK. SURETE WOULD NOT STATE THEM ORALLY TO MAHER. MAHER'S ARREST WAS LOGGED INTO BOOK MARKED

SECURITE". MAHER SPENT DAY AND NIGHT SITTING IN OFFICE OR ON PORCH IN FRONT. GENERALLY HE WAS IGNORED BY OFFICE PERSONNEL.

4. BEFORE DAWN JULY 27 MAHER WAS AWAKENED AND HANDCUFFED. HE WENT BACK TO SLEEP. OFFICE DIRECTOR ARRIVED FOR FIRST TIME AT 8:00, MAHER SPOKE TO HIM BRIEFLY AND AGAIN REQUESTED PERMISSION TO TELEPHONE EMBASSY OR PCD. AROUND 8:30 OR 9:00 OFFICE RECEIVED PHONE CALL EVIDENTLY DIRECT FROM BOKASSA. DIRECTOR STOOD AT ATTENTION ANSWERED "OUI PAPA," ETC. 10:15 MAHER WITH DIRECTOR, ARRESTING OFFICER AND GUARD WENT TO BERENGO WHERE MAHER BROUGHT BEFORE BOKASSA.

5. AT THIS POINT MAHER WAS UNDERSTANDABLY SHAKEN AND HIS RECOLLECTION OF EVENTS IS NOT EXACT. HE BELIEVES BOKASSA SPOKE TO HIM, WHEN HE DID NOT IMMEDIATELY REPLY, HIS GLASSES WERE REMOVED AND CRUSHED ON FLOOR. BOKASSA THEN ASKED WHAT WAS MAHER DOING IN HIS COMPOUND? MAHER CONFUSED BY PROCEEDINGS COULD NOT MUSTER REPLY. BOKASSA COMPLAINED AMERICANS ALWAYS WANTED INFORMATION, AND DID NOT ALLOW MAHER TO SPEAK. BOKASSA THEN SAID SOMETHING TO GUARDS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 STATE 179977

WHO YANKED MAHER OUT OF ROOM TOOK HIM TO COURTYARD AND CLIPPED HIS HAIR AND BEARD. MAHER THEN RETURNED TO BOKASSA'S PRESENCE. A CENTRAL AFRICAN ENGLISH TEACHER, WHOM MAHER BELIEVES ONCE WORKED PC STAGE, WAS BROUGHT IN TO INTERPRET. BOKASSA ASKED "WHAT WERE YOU DOING ON MY GROUNDS? MAHER DENIED BEING ON GROUNDS UNTIL AFTER ARREST. BOKASSA DISMISSED HIM, MAHER TAKEN ABRUPTLY FROM ROOM AND RETURNED TO SURETE OFFICE AT CENTRAL PALACE BANGUI.

COMMENT: ACCORDING TO MAHER BOKASSA CLEARLY UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT HE ARRESTED INSIDE COMPOUND AT KOLONGO RATHER THAN ON ROAD IN FRONT. MAHER'S ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN WAS NOT PERMITTED.

6. BACK IN BANGUI ABOUT 12:30, MAHER WAS ALLOWED TO SEND OUT FOR LUNCH FROM ST. SLYVESTRE. IT ARRIVED WITH SACK OF ITEMS FROM PCD WOODBURY. THIS SACK SOURCE OF CONSIDERABLE RELIEF AS IT INDICATED HIS SITUATION AND WHEREABOUTS KNOWN. LATER IN AFTERNOON MAHER ESCORTED TO HOTEL ROOM WHICH WAS SEARCHED. FAUCHER VISITED AS REPORTED BANGUI 1581. MAHER WITH SEVERAL BOXES OF ITEMS INCLUDING CAMERA, BOOKS, MAP OF WORLD ETC. RETURNED TO OFFICE.

ITEMS WERE TAKEN INTO DIRECTOR'S OFFICE.

7. MAHER ATE PC PROVIDED MEAL AND SPENT ANOTHER NIGHT IN OFFICE. FOLLOWING MORNING AS HIS POSSESSIONS WERE BEING REMOVED FROM OFFICE MAHER ASKED FOR SPARE PAIR OF GLASSES WHICH WERE INSIDE CAMERA BAG ALONG WITH HIS PASSPORT. REQUEST REFUSED.

8. ABOUT NOON MAHER WAS TAKEN STILL WITHOUT ANY EXPLANATION TO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WHERE HE MET SMITH, FAUCHER, WOODBURY, THEN TO AIRPORT FOR DEPARTURE.

9. MAHER STATES THAT HE WAS NEVER PHYSICALLY HIT OR ROUGHED UP. HIS HAIR WAS CUT ABRUPTLY AND HE WAS YANKED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 STATE 179977

AROUND ONLY WHILE IN BOKASSA'S PRESENCE. GOCAE AUTHORITIES NEVER QUESTIONED HIM NOR PROVIDED HIM WITH ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING HIS STATUS. THIS WAS SOURCE OF CONSIDERABLE MENTAL ANXIETY AS HE WAS HANDCUFFED AND ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS MOVED UNDER ARMED GUARD WITHOUT EXPLANATION.

10. MAHER ASSUMES PC MOTORCYCLE STILL AT KOLONGO, HIS CLOTHES, IN HOTEL ROOM. CHRISTOPHER

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